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ABSTRACT

Developed by instructors in Centennial College's Early Childhood Assistance Program, this booklet suggests 12 strategies for helping students become active, responsible, independent learners. For each strategy, the booklet presents a brief description, a research- or practice-based rationale for the strategy, details on how the strategy is implemented, and, in most cases, sample forms, exercises, or instructional materials. The strategies are: (1) orientation activities prior to the beginning of classes; (2) presentation of problem scenarios related to challenges faced during the first weeks of class (e.g., finding the first class) that students must solve in small groups; (3) student assignment of worth or relevance to learning activities; (4) learning contracts; (5) curriculum-based vocabulary building; (6) guided note taking; (7) cooperative studying; (8) 6-4-2, a strategy that begins with the teacher dividing the class into groups of six to work on a series of tasks with three members of the students doing the task and the other three providing feedback and questions; and as the semester progresses, reducing the group sizes to four and then two students; (9) the use of various methods of checking in with students at different points during the semester to assess their progress and satisfaction; (10) the use of a checklist and interview to provide students with feedback on their classroom performance early in the semester; (11) teacher acknowledgement of students' actions or efforts that will assist them in becoming successful students; and (12) student records of their grades on assignments. Contains 17 references. (KP)

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ED 369 463

LEARNER SUPPORT STRATEGIES: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

TC 940 294

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LEARNER SUPPORT STRATEGIES: AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Developed by:

Nancy Hooktwith
Dorothy Kelleher
Sue Wells

June, 1993

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

With the changing demographics in the student population, we college teachers are faced with ever increasing numbers of adult students, students with special needs, and under-prepared students. Many of these students have a history of negative learning experiences which have left them in a state of learned helplessness. In essence, they have become passive because they believe they do not determine the results of their own actions. When they come to college they think they are handing themselves over to those with the power (their teachers and "the system") to make or break them, and hence, do not see the importance of actively engaging in the learning process.

We believe that effective teaching includes the responsibility to assist students in becoming independent learners. In the Early Childhood Assistant program, we have simply had to address ways of meeting that responsibility, since the majority of our students need lots of support in developing an active approach to learning. We are still evolving strategies for helping our students both inside and outside the classroom, but we would like to share with our colleagues the ones we have tried with some success.

Please understand that the ideas in Learner Support Strategies: An Integrated Approach are meant as guidelines rather than prescriptions. Modify and adapt them as you will to suit the requirements of your students. Teaching them how to learn is not an easy task, but a consistent effort will reap strong results. When your students understand that they are largely responsible for their own successes and failures, they will contribute immeasurably to the collective satisfaction of themselves, their peers, and their teachers.

STRATEGIES

STRATEGY: ORIENTATION

When using this strategy, teachers connect with the students for some orientation activities prior to the beginning of classes.

Why

Some studies indicate that there is a higher retention rate for students who make a connection with at least one of their teachers before the semester's academic work begins.

How

Instructors invite the incoming students to an orientation session on the day of their registration. The invitation should be extended to include friends or family as the student desires. Then instructors select activities for this session with the goal of acquainting the students with the program faculty and increasing their comfort level on the first day of classes. Ideas include

- having faculty introduce themselves through the use of concrete materials that reveal something about themselves, e.g., key chain, pictures of children, favorite book.
- writing names of all students on large pieces of heavy paper, mixing up the letters, posting the "jumbled names" on the board and having students unscramble (a student is not permitted to unscramble his/her own name); once the students' names have been unscrambled they write their names correctly on the reverse side and use the cards as name tags for their desks until the class has learned their names.
- introducing key college personnel to students, e.g. Dean, Chairperson, faculty from other departments, with whom they will have contact.
- having students record one question they have about the program or college on an index card; these are collected and used in the second part of orientation which occurs on the first day of class. At the conclusion of the orientation activities, each question is read aloud and answered by the students based on what they have learned during orientation.

STRATEGY: PROBLEM SOLVING SCENARIOS

Students become familiar with college support systems while developing critical thinking skills.

Why

The first week of classes can be very intimidating for many students, especially since they enter college with a history of being fed information rather than having to seek it out. This exercise encourages them to take action if a problem arises and introduces them to the number of services they have access to.

How

Students are presented with problem scenarios which they must solve in small groups. Problem scenarios are designed to help students recognize and meet challenges they will face in the first few weeks of classes.

- What textbooks are needed?
- Where can they be bought?
- How can they be paid for?
- Where is the first class?
- What do all the codes mean on the timetable?
- If the class schedule conflicts with a part-time job, what can be done?
- Who is there to discuss concerns about assignments with?
- What can be done about an O.S.A.P. problem?
- How can a student find a part-time job?

As part of the problem solving exercise, the teacher holds the resources that the students may need to solve the problem. When the group reaches a roadblock, the teacher assists the students in identifying and achieving access to resources that may be helpful. All the problems are debriefed as a large group with each small group sharing their solution to the problem. Faculty use the large group debriefing to reinforce specific information such as timetables, office hours, taking responsibility for their own learning, bookstore procedures, and program policies. Examples of problem scenarios and possible resources follow.

QUESTION

You are expected to buy textbooks for some of your courses.
How will you go about getting them?

RESOURCES:

- course outline with texts listed
- discussion re: methods of payment
- map of college with bookstore highlighted

QUESTION

You are expected to be in class an on time.
How are you going to plan for this?

RESOURCES:

- student timetable
- blank timetable forms
- fill in timetable using overhead with students

QUESTION

You have just started college. It's the third week of classes and things aren't exactly the way that you thought they would be. You don't understand the course outlines and there seem to be a hundred of them! The course numbered KD-101 is really confusing and you have an assignment due in a week. What will you do?

RESOURCES:

- faculty office hours
- procedure for leaving message
- faculty extensions
- course outline

QUESTIONS

You know that you are going to miss some classes in a few weeks.
What should you do?

RESOURCES:

- student handbook

STRATEGY: ASSIGNING WORTH TO LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Through this strategy, the student is assisted in identifying the value of daily classroom activities.

Why

Simply stated, students must see some relevance in course content to make the effort to learn it. By connecting what we are teaching in the classroom to what will be expected of them by their future employers, we are assisting them in recognizing the worth of their classroom experiences. While motivating them to learn, we are preparing them for the workplace.

How

This strategy is implemented in conjunction with a competency-based field manual. The instructors of core courses identify learning objectives at the beginning of each class or unit. As homework or review each week, students are required to cross-match the core class objectives with the field manual competencies to reinforce the relevance of the classwork. An organizing form, like the one included, should be given to the students to facilitate the process. To use this form the instructor should provide on the board or on an overhead the objectives for the particular week. The cross-matching is then left to the individual student. The results can be used as initial discussion in the fieldwork seminar class and/or as a review at the beginning of the next class.

4A

CLASS _____ DATE _____ TOPIC _____			
CLASS OBJECTIVES **To be able to:**	**FIELD MANUAL OBJECTIVES**		
	Goal	**Page**	**Objective**

CLASS KD-102 Health and Well Being DATE September 20, 1993 TOPIC Diapering			
CLASS OBJECTIVES **To be able to:**	**FIELD MANUAL OBJECTIVES**		
	Goal	**Page**	**Objective**
1. Change a diaper ensuring the safety of the child.	Goal 2, Page 17, Objective 6 Takes appropriate action to avoid potential danger.		
2. Meet the child's social/emotional needs during the diapering routine.	Goal 5, Page 20, Objective 5 Plans experiences that encourage the child's development during physical care.		
3. Recognize when a child needs a diaper change.	Goal 2, Page 17, Objective 7 Assists staff in implementing positive bathroom routines.		
4. Complete diapering procedure without errors or omissions.	Goal 2, Page 17, Objective 2 Follows sanitary practices of the agency. Goal 3, Page 18, Objective 6 Disposes of waste carefully.		

STRATEGY: LEARNING CONTRACTS

Through this strategy, students identify and contract for the grade they will strive to achieve by the end of the semester.

Why

Contracting for grades provides the students with a direct link between the work they choose to do and the grade they receive in the course. By determining these outcomes with their instructor at the onset of the course, they are given the opportunity to take ownership of their goals and performance. This approach promotes the internal feeling of control so lacking in students with learned helplessness.

How

The professor develops specific assignments that the student must complete in order to achieve each grade level. Care must be taken to develop assignments that will fulfil course objectives at each level since a student selecting a grade of "C" will not be completing the "B" or "A" level assignments, and the student contracting for a "B" will not complete "A" level assignments. Each assignment is graded on a satisfactory or unsatisfactory basis. Students select the grade that they will strive to achieve and sign a contract with the instructor, but should be made aware that these contracts are negotiable throughout the semester.

Centennial College
Early Childhood Education Program
Child Studies Department

Winter 1993
Instructor:
Sue Wells

INTRODUCTION TO SUPERVISION & ADMINISTRATION
CY-236

GRADE CONTRACT

STUDENT'S NAME:_____ SECTION:_____

CONTRACTING FOR GRADE OF _____

For a maximum "C+" grade:

1. Class Meeting Participant ____

For a maximum "B+" grade:

Completion of #1, plus

2. Class Meeting Resource Person ____

For a maximum "A+" grade:

Completion of #1, #2, plus

3. Chairperson Role ____

TO BE COMPLETED BY COURSE PROFESSOR:

I am pleased to confirm that a grade of _____ for CY-236 has been filed on your behalf.

_____ _____
Professor's Signature Date

STRATEGY: VOCABULARY BUILDING

Through this strategy, the student is assisted in understanding and effectively using specific, curriculum-based vocabulary.

Why

Emphasis on vocabulary building sends a clear message to the students that the teacher believes in their ability to master field-related terminology. The built-in feedback mechanism helps establish reinforcement for efforts leading to a new behaviour pattern for the students. In addition, confidence in field vocabulary has a positive effect on the students' level of self-esteem.

How

Students are required to develop a vocabulary file for field-specific words. The system for recording words is initiated in one course, by one teacher, and is part of the grading criteria for that subject. The initiating instructor introduces the strategy and assists the students in organizing a system of recording key words, such as using index cards ordered alphabetically and/or by subject headings. Students are expected to record each word or term, a definition, a sample of the word used properly in context, and, perhaps, a couple of synonyms and antonyms for that word.

Then, the remainder of the instructors can become involved in the process by identifying during classes key words of particular relevance to the field of study. Students are encouraged, of course, to add words or concepts that pose some difficulty for them. Instructors may also wish to assign field-related reading in appropriate periodicals to stimulate new vocabulary cards and to provide more context for words students are working on. Finally, using the vocabulary cards as a means of review in any class helps the students see the relationships among their courses and reinforces the importance of the students' keeping their cards up-to-date.

COGNITION	LANGUAGE
• Development of the expanding ability to think and reason When children play with puzzles their cognition is being challenged.	• A system of signs or words used to express oneself. The language of a newborn is crying.

Centennial College
Early Childhood Assistant Program
Child Studies Department

Fall 1992
Instructor:
Nancy Hooktwith

ROLES AND STUDY SKILLS
KD-103

DEFINITIONS CHECKLIST

STUDENT'S NAME:_____

EVALUATION

DATE:	GRADE: /5
• has cards • alphabetical • information correct • defined correctly • sentence appropriate	___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

WORD/SENTENCE

1.

2.

3.

4.

STRATEGY: GUIDED NOTE TAKING

Guided note taking provides a structure and a series of prompt words or phrases that are given to the students to direct their note taking for each lecture. The number and length of the prompts are reduced as the semester progresses.

Why

By systematically guiding students through the skills of note taking, teachers can influence the self-confidence and feelings of control that students have in a classroom. At the very least, note taking helps to ensure that the students are paying attention in class. In addition, having clear and accurate notes makes studying considerably easier. The resulting better marks on tests will serve as an incentive for them to further refine their note taking skills. Effective note taking, then, allows students to feel in control of their own performance.

How

Students are taught the Cornell Method of note taking in one class. They are then given a short lecture to practice the method, comparing their resulting notes to those of the instructor. For subsequent classes the students are given guided note sheets at the beginning of all classes. These sheets contain prompts outlining the lecture content. The length and number of prompts are systematically decreased for each lecture (samples are included), so that eventually the students will no longer rely on this assistance.

Please note that the Cornell Method does not work for all students. Instructors should assist those students with other methods of note taking that serve different learning styles. Please see the Centennial College Study Hints for other ideas.

EXAMPLE 1

CLASS _____ DATE _____

SUBJECT _____ PAGE _____

AGENDA
1. Review
2. Self-Discipline
3. Homework

1. Review

a) Goals of Guidance
Help children learn to

1
2
3

b) We can reach goals through

1
2
3

2. Self-Discipline

a) Definition

1
2
3

EXAMPLE 2

CLASS _____ DATE _____

SUBJECT _____ PAGE _____

AGENDA
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. Misbehaviour Review

i)
ii)
iii)

2. Positive Guidance

a) Tips for Guiding Behaviour

_____months	_____months	_____months

EXAMPLE 3

CLASS _____ DATE _____

SUBJECT _____ PAGE _____

AGENDA
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

1. Review Reading

2. Using Positive Wording

EXAMPLE 4

CLASS _____ DATE _____

SUBJECT _____ PAGE _____

STRATEGY: COOPERATIVE STUDYING

This strategy utilizes small study groups structured by the teacher to promote not simply memorizing but effective processing of content by the students.

Why

We all know that periodic reviews instead of last minute cramming increase students' recall of material. By structuring a mechanism for these reviews as part of the course, the teacher helps develop the studying habit. An additional advantage of this strategy is that it provides the teacher with an opportunity to monitor students' comprehension of course material. We plan to reinforce this strategy with quizzes to illustrate to the students how cooperative studying makes them successful in test taking situations. This strategy could be easily adapted to reviewing textbook chapters or supplementary reading or reviewing assignments.

How

The basic process entails having the students review and summarize classroom material. As partners, the students each review their notes silently. Notes are then set aside. One partner recalls the material, summarizing the main facts and ideas covered by the teacher. The other partner listens and then corrects errors, notes omissions, and elaborates on information. The partners then switch roles and review the next section.
(Adapted from the work of Lambotte and others. Cooperative Learning and Test Taking: Transfer of Skills.)

STRATEGY: 6-4-2

This strategy assists students in taking more and more responsibility for participation within student groups.

Why

Use of small group tasks is a teaching technique that is often used by faculty to support course content. Students often define their role within groups very early in the semester and there is seldom a role change as the semester progresses. This technique assists in creating role changes for both the passive and the active student.

How

The instructor begins by defining a series of tasks that will be done in small groups. A repetitive task works well (for an example of a task see Strategy: Cooperative Studying). Begin by dividing the class into groups of six. Each group is then divided in half with three students doing the original task and the other three students providing them with feedback and questions. Group size is reduced to four and then two as the semester progresses. As group size is reduced, the groups still split in half with one half doing the original task and the other half providing feedback. This means that when the group size reaches two, each student has the full responsibility for completing the task or listening and providing feedback.

STRATEGY: CHECK-POINTS

This strategy involves checking in with the students at different points during the semester to see how they are doing.

Why

Checking-in makes sense for a number of reasons. It provides teachers with ongoing feedback on the success of their teaching. It also helps the students to recall the main points and prepare for studying.

How

There are lots of different ways of checking-in. Here are some ideas we have used with some success:

* During the last 5 minutes of class have the students list 3 or 4 main points that have been covered that day. These can be reviewed by the teacher to receive a snapshot of the class as seen by the students. The students could also share these mini-summaries in small groups to provide one another with a comparison which may help identify note taking difficulties. These points can also be used as a review at the beginning of the next class.

* Check in with students periodically throughout the semester by sending them a note or card asking "How is it going?" These notes can be timed so that each student receives one early in the semester and then again at a later date.

* Journal writing on a specific topic throughout the semester is another method that assists the teacher in "checking in" on the student. This activity works well in field placement experiences.

STRATEGY: STUDENT SUCCESS CHECKLIST/INTERVIEW

Using a checklist and interview, the instructors provide the students with feedback on their classroom performances early in the semester.

Why

It is important that the students experiencing learned helplessness know that their instructors have confidence in their ability to succeed. It is also crucial that they receive quick reinforcement for behaviours that will lead to success and strategies to change behaviours that will not. The student success checklist/interview is a fairly comprehensive and direct means of providing this feedback.

How

A checklist of behaviours that contribute to success in the classroom is developed by instructors possibly in conjunction with students (sample included). In the third week of the semester, all instructors complete a checklist on each student. The results are compiled and shared with the students in personal interviews. During the interview successful behaviours are reinforced and unsuccessful ones are discouraged. Students are guided into developing a plan of action for change if necessary.

Centennial College
Early Childhood Assistant Program
Child Studies Department

	Fall '92	Winter '93
Not a Concern	___	___
Concern	___	___
Real Concern	___	___

STUDENT SUCCESS CHECKLIST

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

SCALE: 1 Needs Lots Of Improvement 2 Needs Some Improvement 3 Needs No Improvement

	FALL	WINTER	COMMENTS
1. Attendance	1 2 3	1 2 3	
2. Punctuality	1 2 3	1 2 3	
3. Class Participation - Quantity	1 2 3	1 2 3	
4. Class Participation - Quality	1 2 3	1 2 3	
5. Writing - Spelling	1 2 3	1 2 3	
6. Writing - Grammar	1 2 3	1 2 3	
7. Writing - Speed/Flow	1 2 3	1 2 3	
8. Oral Ability - Structure	1 2 3	1 2 3	
9. Oral Ability - Volume	1 2 3	1 2 3	
10. Organization	1 2 3	1 2 3	
11. Interpersonal Skills - Attitude, Group Work, etc.	1 2 3	1 2 3	
12. Accepting Feedback	1 2 3	1 2 3	
13. Taking Responsibility	1 2 3	1 2 3	
14. Showing Initiative	1 2 3	1 2 3	

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

STRATEGY: WE'VE NOTICED

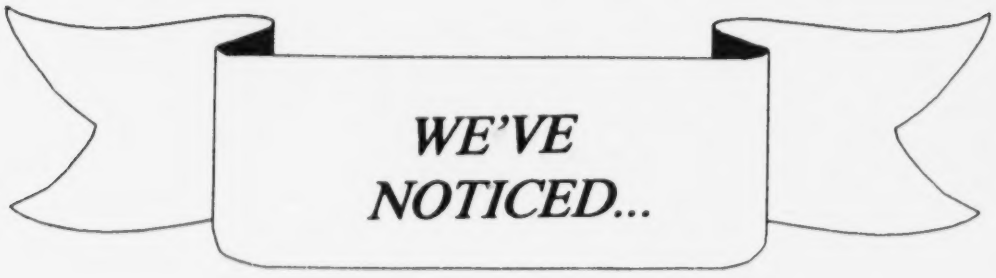
Students are recognized by the teacher for efforts or actions that will assist them in being successful students.

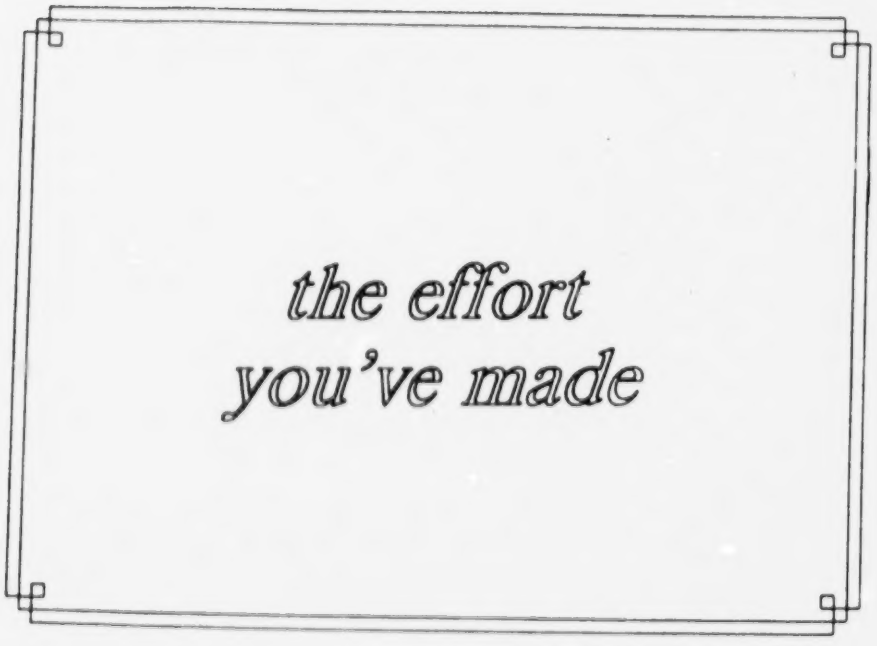
Why

There are many student behaviours that we recognize as likely to lead to success. These include attendance, punctuality, participation, effective note taking, etc. These strategies are being newly learned by many students as they enter college, and reinforcement will assist them in continuing their efforts.

How

Teachers personally acknowledge students' work, contributions to class, great questions, etc. by sending "I've noticed..." cards. Make a commitment to give out a minimum number each week. "Post-it" notes are a simple way to complete this task.


WE'VE
NOTICED...


the effort
you've made

STRATEGY: GRADE RECORD

This strategy provides students with a simple method of recording their grades as they are accumulated throughout the semester.

Why

Students are often mystified by how their teachers arrive at a final grade. As they progress through the semester they are unsure of how well they are doing. This simple technique encourages them to track their progress and compare it to the total picture.

How

The teacher provides students with a grade record form that lists the semester's assignments for a course, and provides students with places to record the grade they receive and then translate that grade into part of the cumulative total. (see attached example). Upon the return of assignments, students are reminded to record their grades and assess their progress and standing in the course.

Centennial College
Early Childhood Assistant Program
Child Studies Department

Winter 1993
Instructor:
Nancy Hooktwith

SEMINAR - FINAL PLACEMENT
KD-111
GRADE RECORD

ASSIGNMENT	GRADE	ACCUMULATED GRADE
1. Planning Sheets		
#1	/10	/10
#2	/10	/20
#3	/10	/30
#4	/10	/40
2. Sharing Experiences	/20	/60
3. Self-Evaluation		
a) Mid-Term	/10	/70
b) Final	/10	/80
4. In Class Projects:		
a) Curriculum Implementation	/5	/85
b) Curriculum Implementation	/5	/90
c) Curriculum Implementation	/5	/95
d) Last Day of Placement	/5	/100
FINAL GRADE:	/100	

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